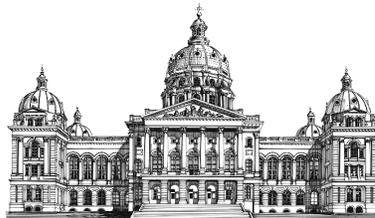


Iowa Legislative Services Agency Fiscal Services



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Traffic Safety Program Funding

ISSUE

This **Issue Review** is an overview of the funding provided for traffic safety projects throughout the State. Iowa has two traffic safety programs that are primarily used to improve safety at high-crash locations, including the federal Hazard Elimination Safety Program and the State Traffic Safety Improvement Program.

AFFECTED AGENCIES

Department of Transportation (DOT)
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Local Governments

CODE AUTHORITY

23 United States Code §§ 152
Section 312.2(15), Code of Iowa
Chapter 761-164.3(312)(3c), Iowa Administrative Code

BACKGROUND

In 2003, the Federal Highway Administration began a campaign toward reducing major traffic injuries and fatalities, with the goal of reducing traffic fatalities nationally by 33.0% by 2008.

In previous years, traffic safety improvements focused on intersections and other high-crash roadway segments, providing equal emphasis on the number of crashes, crash rate, and crash severity. The Federal Highway Administration is now requesting that states place more emphasis on roadways with major injury crashes and fatalities.

The Federal Highway Administration specifically identified three areas of concern; including intersection fatalities, pedestrian fatalities, and roadway departures that include run-off-road and head-on crashes. Statistics show that fatalities and major injuries in Iowa are more likely to occur from roadway departures. The majority of these crashes occur on rural, two-lane highways and are due to drivers who go off the road and overcorrect, throwing the vehicle

back into traffic or the ditch. According to the DOT, roadway departures contributed to 1,356 of 2,317 fatalities between 1996 and 2000.

The cost-benefit ratio for infrastructure improvements to prevent roadway departures is considerably higher than for infrastructure improvements to intersections. Since most intersections are located in urban areas, such improvements, which may include adding lanes, lighting, or traffic signals, are costly due to the expense of buying additional right-of-way to make the improvements. Additionally, since urban intersection traffic usually travels at lower speeds, the crashes are usually less severe.

Infrastructure improvements used to assist in alleviating roadway departure crashes include paving shoulders or adding shoulder rumble strips. These improvements are relatively inexpensive when compared to the consequences of not incorporating such improvements.

CURRENT SITUATION

Federal Hazard Elimination Program

The 1998 Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21) requires that 10.0% of apportioned Surface Transportation Program funds be made available for safety infrastructure projects as defined by the federal Hazard Elimination Program and the federal Railway/Highway Crossings Program.

The federal Hazard Elimination Program targets the highest vehicle crash locations in states. Under the Program, states are required to identify hazardous locations that may constitute a danger to motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians, and implement projects for improvement. Such improvements include paved shoulders, milled-in shoulder and centerline rumble strips, and two-lane shoulder widening.

For federal fiscal year (FFY) 2003, Iowa's apportionment from the federal Hazard Elimination Program totaled \$2.7 million. The DOT is currently using the funds for two infrastructure projects designed to reduce major injuries and fatalities due to roadway departure crashes. The first project is along a 10-mile stretch of Highway 63, from Iowa 3 North to New Hampton. The project includes providing a four-foot paved shoulder, and adding milled-in rumble strips in the shoulders. The second project involves adding milled-in rumble strips for all miles of shoulder along I-35 and I-80 throughout the State, providing the shoulder is in adequate condition for milling.

The total cost for both projects is estimated at \$2.2 million. Of that amount, 90.0% will be paid from federal Hazard Elimination Program funds, and the remaining 10.0% from the State's Primary Road Fund. The remaining \$500,000 in federal Hazard Elimination Funds will be expended on the projects if bid costs exceed estimated costs, or the funds will be carried forward for future projects.

In addition to these two projects, the DOT is also expending federal Hazard Elimination Program funds in Des Moines. The intersection of SE 9th and Porter is currently at the top of the State's safety improvement candidate location list. The City of Des Moines is widening the intersection to provide left-turn lanes. The total cost of the project is \$1.9 million. Of that amount, 90.0% will be paid from federal Hazard Elimination Program funds, and the City of Des Moines will pay the remaining 10.0%. The federal Hazard Elimination Program funds for this project were previously obligated in FFY 2002.

State Traffic Safety Improvement Program

The State Traffic Safety Improvement Program was established by the General Assembly in 1987. An amount equal to 0.5 of 1.0% of Road Use Tax Fund revenues is credited to the Program. The funds are used for traffic safety improvements or studies on public roads under city, county, or State jurisdiction. The Program consists of the following three categories:

- Site Specific – Construction or improvement of traffic operations at specific sites with an accident history. The amount expended for each project is not to exceed \$500,000.
- Traffic Control Devices – Materials purchased for initial installation or replacement of obsolete traffic control devices. The amount expended for all projects is not to exceed \$500,000.
- Safety Initiatives – Transportation safety research studies or public information initiatives such as sign inventory, work zone safety, accident data improvement, and older driver safety issues. The amount expended for all projects is not to exceed \$500,000.

At the time FY 2004 projects were approved for the Program, 0.5 of 1.0% of Road Use Tax Fund receipts were estimated at \$5.2 million. In addition to the \$5.2 million, additional funds were available, including a Road Use Tax Fund adjustment and FY 2003 reversions and carryover funds. The estimated amount available for projects in FY 2004 is \$6.6 million as follows:

FY 2004 State Traffic Safety Improvement Program

(Estimated Available Funding)

FY 2004	Estimated Road Use Tax Fund Receipts*	\$ 5,200,000
FY 2003	Road Use Tax Fund Adjustment	272,000
FY 2003	Carryover Funds	712,000
	Reversions	450,000
	Total	<u><u>\$ 6,634,000</u></u>

* Estimated receipts at the time projects were approved.

Of the total \$6.6 million available, \$5.7 million was obligated for all project types in FY 2004, as detailed in the table below. The remaining \$900,000 will be carried over to FY 2005.

FY 2004 State Traffic Safety Improvement Program

(Amount Obligated for Each Project Type)

Site Specific	\$ 4,694,000
Traffic Control Devices	500,000
Safety Initiatives*	511,000
Total	<u><u>\$ 5,705,000</u></u>

* Includes a reversion of \$11,000 from FY 2003.

When project costs exceed the total amount of funds obligated, the State, cities, and counties are required to pay the difference. For FY 2004, the State will pay the estimated remaining balance of \$7.5 million for Site Specific and Traffic Control projects, while cities and counties will pay an estimated \$3.8 million. The table below provides the Site Specific and Traffic Control project costs for the State, cities, and counties.

**FY 2004 State Traffic Safety
Improvement Program**

(Costs Per Project Type for the State, Cities, and Counties)

	Obligated TSIP Funds	State or Local Portion*	Total Project Cost
State			
Site Specific	\$ 1,509,000	\$ 4,343,000	\$ 5,852,000
Traffic Control Devices	226,000	3,109,000	3,335,000
Total	\$ 1,735,000	\$ 7,452,000	\$ 9,187,000
Cities & Counties			
Site Specific	\$ 3,185,000	\$ 3,092,000	\$ 6,277,000
Traffic Control Devices	274,000	719,000	993,000
Total	\$ 3,459,000	\$ 3,811,000	\$ 7,270,000

* Funds are paid from the State's Primary Road Fund or the General Fund of cities and counties.

FUTURE FUNDING ISSUES

One day before the six-year Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA-21) was to expire, the President signed a five-month extension of the Act. The Surface Transportation Extension Act of 2003 postponed the expiration date of the Act from September 30, 2003, until February 29, 2004. Once the Act is reauthorized, it will be referred to as the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003, or SAFETEA. The focus of the reauthorized Act will be on transportation safety.

Based on the federal government's new initiative aimed at decreasing traffic-related injuries and fatalities by 33.0% in the next five years, additional infrastructure improvements and safety initiatives will be needed to meet the goal. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003, as currently drafted, provides for an additional \$1.0 billion per year of federal Highway Trust Fund dollars over and above each year's estimated receipts into the Highway Trust Fund. The source of additional revenue is currently unknown, however, an increase in federal fuel taxes is possible. The funds will be dedicated to improving highway infrastructure performance and maintenance. The Bill increases the amount obligated for safety programs and projects, from \$3.9 billion to \$8.6 billion, and provides for new incentive bonuses to reward states that achieve proven safety results.

When Iowa's Traffic Safety Improvement Program was created in 1987, the average cost of a Site Specific project was \$500,000. Today, that cost is approximately \$1.0 million. The \$500,000 cap on the amount of Traffic Safety Improvement funds obligated for each Site Specific project prevents many local governments from applying for funds, since local governments cannot pay the balance on the projects. Therefore, the DOT asserts that the estimated \$5.0 million allocated annually for the Traffic Safety Improvement Program is not sufficient to meet future traffic safety needs, especially those of local governments.

The General Assembly may wish to consider following the federal government's lead, and provide additional funding for traffic safety by increasing the current Road Use Tax Fund allocation for the State's Traffic Safety Improvement Program. If additional funding is provided, the DOT plans to raise the \$500,000 cap on Site Specific projects, making it more practical for local governments to apply for Traffic Safety Improvement Program funds.

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Traffic Safety Program Funding
<http://staffweb.legis.state.ia.us/lfb/IREVIEW/ireview>
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